Evolution

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Evolution

by TigerPrawn

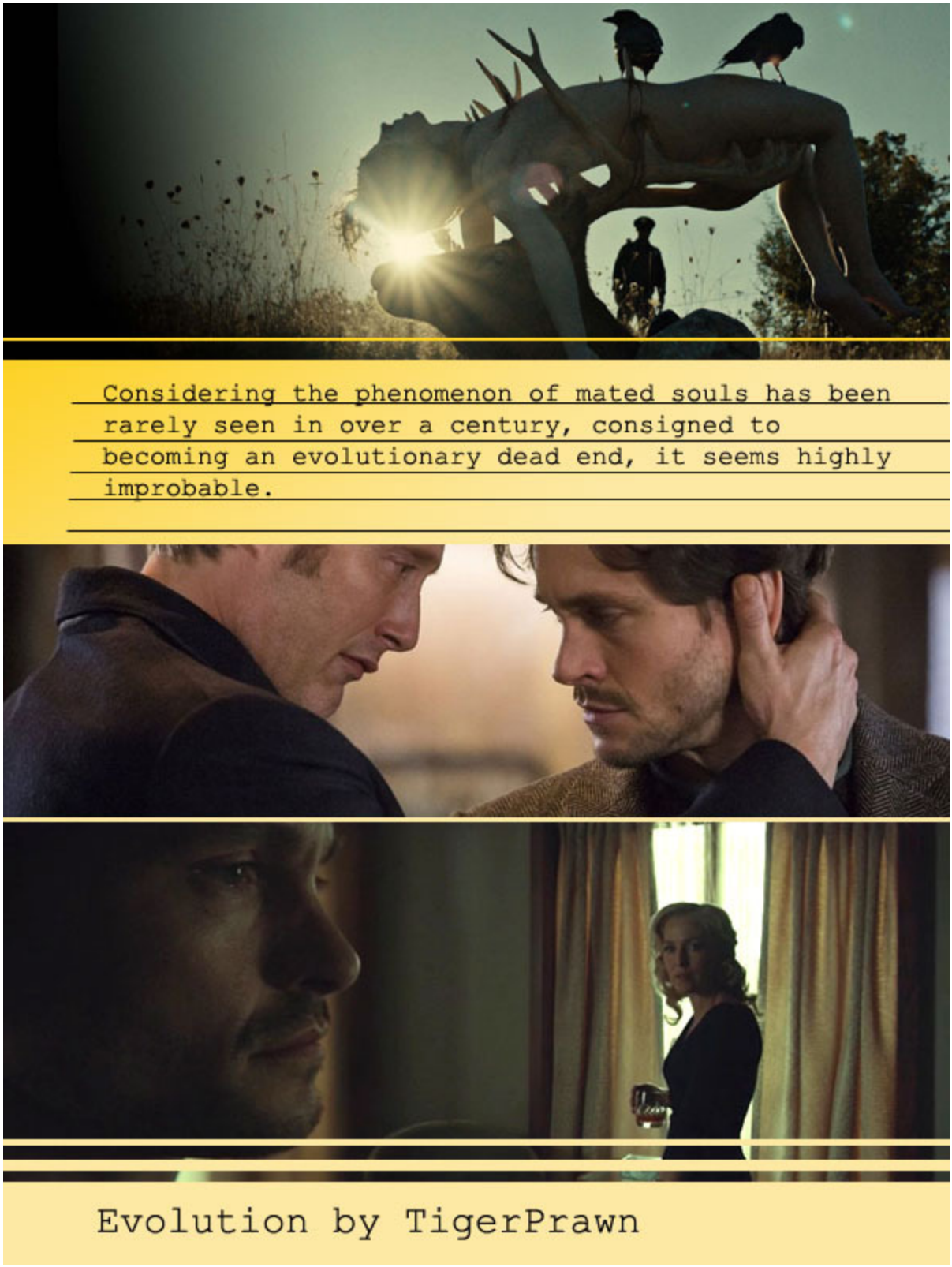
Summary

Considering the phenomenon of mated souls has been rarely seen in over a century, consigned to becoming an evolutionary dead end, it seems highly improbable. And yet...

Notes

This is my fic from @lovecrimebooks #RadianceAnthology

Beta'd by the amazing Victorine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“When did you know, Will?” Hannibal kept his tone level and impassive. Realising too late the accidental mimicry of their therapy sessions of old. He watched as Will straightened in the dim light of the room, standing away from the table and the subject of his attention. His hands wet and near black in this light.

Will's reaction to his words was to scoff and shoot him a look of amused disdain, unmistakable even in the low light. "When did *you* know, doctor?"

Hannibal's mouth twitched momentarily into a wry smile at Will's near teasing tone, before resettling. He knew even before he asked that Will would not answer first.

Hannibal took in a breath, thoughtful, before replying. "I had my suspicions at our first meeting. Uncle Jack's office." He paused and looked at Will, seemingly lost in thought before him. "You did too I think." It didn't need to be a question. It wasn't, and yet Will gave a firm nod after only a short hesitation.

Will looked away and spoke the words to the middle distance. "It's a rare phenomenon, I didn't want to believe it. Couldn't believe it until I finally knew the real you. *Saw* you… stopped fighting *what* I saw."

Hannibal nodded. "Would it surprise you to know I was equally as hesitant in the beginning? Trepidatious at the thought of connecting with someone..."

Will's gaze returned to him - scepticism turning to something that seemed to be sympathy before a soft smile. He enjoyed the brightness that spread over his lover's face and stepped closer. Will leaned into him, brushing his lips over Hannibal's as he replied - "It's hard to imagine you anything less than eager these days."

Will swiped a thumb over his lips and then pushed it into his mouth. Hannibal savoured the taste of the warm, wet blood on it. How monstrous his beauty had become.

*

"I heard that Shrike went mad and killed all those girls because his soul mate had died. Before his wife and so-"

Will held up a hand to cut the student off. He was still annoyed that the class had applauded when he had walked in. Inappropriate. Now this? Everyone seemed to have gone a little crazy since he shot Hobbs. Not least himself.

He'd heard the same theory touted by some sensationalist journo who made Freddie Lounds seem like the most integrity driven reporter alive. Of course, Hobbs had had a high school sweetheart who died tragically. Of course, there was the possibility that had fed into his mindset. But was it why he'd killed? No. The whole soul mate angle was to push papers and Will was disappointed in his student for bringing it up - which he conveyed in a look.

He cleared his throat. "Mr Johnson, theories and conjecture are one thing. Evidence and facts quite another. Have you evidence that Sheila Downing and Hobbs were soul mates?"

There was silence and the student both paled and reddened in a way that was near fascinating. When there was no reply Will gave a nod.

"No. Considering the phenomenon of mated souls has been rarely seen in over a century, consigned to becoming an evolutionary dead end, it seems highly improbable." He paused to

sigh and added - "Perhaps be more selective in your reading for this class? I have neither the time nor inclination to discuss crackpot tabloid theories."

That brought a light chuckle from around the auditorium. Will adjusted his glasses and continued with the lecture. Something itched under his skin.

*

"It's funny. By that lecture I think I knew. I didn't want to know, because I wasn't ready to deal with what it meant." He felt an echo of the itch, the tingle along his skin. The memory of an ache.

Will shifted so that their bodies were pressed more fully together. He enjoyed the warmth of Hannibal's bare skin in contrast to the rapidly cooling cabin where they had, less than an hour before, brought their kill for butchering. Not too dissimilar to the cabin Hobbs had used. No antlers here though.

"And when was that?" Hannibal's lips tweaked with a light amusement.

"Before I was arrested." Will's tone was flat but he knew from Hannibal's slight grin that he could see the humour in his eyes. The tease there, his incarceration wasn't something he was going to let Hannibal easily forget.

"You had already begun to suspect me. Tell me why, Will? You would have said empathy, intuitive leaps - but tell me honestly?" Hannibal's words came out soft and low, sending a shiver through Will.

"The truth," Will confirmed, "is that I saw in you what I saw in me. I knew you were the Ripper as much as I knew I had the capacity to be." He could admit that now, after everything. After Becoming.

"But you still fought it," Hannibal tsked with a grin before he snaked his arms to Will's waist in a facsimile of their embrace on the bluff.

"I was locked up because of you!" His tone fell somewhere between indignant and jovial as he breathed against Hannibal's neck. There was so much in their shared past - much of it bad - that he had to treat it lightly.

The truth was that though he might not have acted entirely as Hannibal had, he understood *why* he had. And whilst forgiveness was beyond them at this point, acceptance was something he'd had to embrace. Pitfalls of soul mates. Another reason why he had known that Hobbs and his high school sweetheart hadn't been soul mates - because he knew exactly how it felt.

It didn't drive you to anything. It was about compatibility. Finding that perfect-fit other half that society seemed eager for everyone to find or become miserable trying. That person that made your skin zing and dulled the deep ache...

*

Will could hear the shuddering breath of the man that was almost his victim. Ingram was near sobbing and covered in horse viscera, and yet Will was somewhere else. Near floating. What might it have been like if he'd actually killed the man? If Hannibal hadn't stopped him? Hannibal's mouth was so close to his that Will could feel hot puffs of air brush over his skin.

A hand was at the back of his neck, as Hannibal brought them so close together. The touch burned into his skin. There was a crackle of energy there, as with every time they had ever chanced to touch, sending Will's mind into overdrive as the pendulum swung and his imagination supplied images of where this could lead.

In his mind's eye he could see Hannibal's hands moving over him. If he didn't know full well that they remained at his neck and hand - removing the gun - then he might have been fooled into thinking they really did touch him intimately. It felt so real, visceral. Sparks of touch along his skin that connected them and made the imagined touch feel more real than any he had ever felt. He shook the image from his thoughts, even as his eyes fell upon Hannibal's lips.

*

"You thought about it," Hannibal stated, adding "often?" as a question on the end, though he knew his grin betrayed his thoughts - that he believed 'often' to be the case regardless of what Will might answer.

Will huffed a sigh against his skin, sending a spark of electricity along it where they connected - his hands on Will's naked hips tightened.

"The connection?" Will's words came out rasped, their closeness often overwhelmed him quickly. Will swallowed thickly before he continued, his voice rough. "It's… hard to ignore…"

When Will's words trailed off he knew what his lover was thinking. Despite everything. Because of everything. How lucky they were. How lucky to feel this. Yes, an evolutionary dead end but a reality for them. The connection was overwhelming on every level - mental, emotional and even physical. Such intensity, it was no wonder that evolution had sought to discontinue it.

How lucky they were.

He felt Will's hands move up his arms, slick with the blood that painted them both.

"Some days I thought about nothing else." Will's lips found his flesh, open mouthed kisses sucking and licking along his collarbone collecting sweat and blood both. Hannibal felt the electricity of the touch race over his skin and down his spine.

*

Do you ache for him?

Bedelia's words had echoed around his skull and settled deep in his bones as the night enveloped him on the bluff. No, not the words. The feeling of being caught, of having someone suspect something he thought he had kept so well hidden. The ache. That ongoing, familiar ache.

Yes he ached. He had ached since the day they had met, even more since they had been parted. No matter what he did to try and end it, resolve it, ignore it - it always remained.

The ache had started with a jolt of electricity, the first time they had innocently touched. The firing of nerves that confirmed what he had suspected and ignored, even then. Even now. Or at least until he looked down at the blackness covering his hands and consuming him as much as that ache ever had.
He panted and reached out his hand, feeling that same almost painful hum along his skin as Hannibal pulled him to his feet and into a near embrace. The ache dulled, disparate parts of himself coalesced into something else. Acceptance. A completion.

He saw his own radiance reflected in Hannibal's gaze.

It was beautiful.

*

Will was panting, his breath hot against Hannibal's neck as their hands slid over each other. The feel of the blood, slick and warm on their skin, was something Hannibal would always be awed by. It was… indulgent.

Where he had crafted a literal person suit to protect himself from the viscera of death, Will preferred to bare himself to it where possible. To let it sink into his skin as they butchered, sometimes when they killed - if able and appropriate. It was something Hannibal had immediately enjoyed - basked in.

Fingers that had squeezed the life from their victim - removed the heart with delicate and practiced ease - now drew patterns in his skin with the blood. Hannibal shuddered, pulling back enough to force Will to look at him - his eyes shining, radiant. Truly radiant.

"Say it, Will."

As he had on this day four years earlier. Before they had resurfaced and created a life together. Before they had acknowledged the preternatural bond between them. Before they revelled in it and fell into this ritual of recitation. Their own oral history recounting the connection that went unacknowledged for so long. That ached within them both until that night on the bluff.

"Please." Hannibal breathed the word as he leaned into Will again, slipping his hands to the man's waist as their lips, speckled with blood spatter, were close enough to share breath.

Will huffed a light laugh through panted breaths, the motion pulling his cheek enough to make the slice of the scar there shine. His hand came up to grasp at Hannibal's shoulder as he looked up through lidded eyes, smiling -

“It’s beautiful.”

Hannibal smiled in return and closed the distance, their lips meeting in a familiar and yet never less intoxicating kiss, regardless of how many years passed.

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